

**Child Welfare Improvement Committee
Indiana Court Improvement Program**

Minutes

March 4, 2016

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

1. Members present. Magistrate Heather Mollo (chair), Kimberly Howe Ferguson, Cathy Graham, Sam Criss, Nancy Fisher.
2. Staff present. Matthew Hagenbush and Angela Reid-Brown.
3. Guests present. Heather Kestian and Leah Hemze-Mills, DCS
4. Welcome and Introductions. New members Sam Criss and Nancy Fisher were welcomed to the Committee. Committee members introduced themselves.
5. Approval of Minutes from January 8, 2016 meeting. The minutes from the January 8, 2016 meeting were approved by consensus.
6. Presentation on Children in Care over 24 Months. Sam Criss and Leah Hemze-Mills discussed the data presentation referenced by Lisa Rich at the January 8 meeting and reviewed its contents with the committee. The presentation was an examination of the population of children in care on 7/1/2014 who had been in care for more than 24 months, including their length of stay, the services provided to them, and their case plan goals.
7. Human Trafficking. Heather Kestian presented on the DCS response to the growing problem of human trafficking of children. Under federal law, DCS is required to screen for human trafficking indicators by October 2016. To comply with that legislation, DCS has developed a screening tool and assessment for use by its employees to identify children who are victims of human trafficking. The screening tool and assessment were distributed to the committee. The tool and assessment are in the late draft stages – they may be slightly changed, but are likely to be final. DCS plans to field test it in May/June, train its employees in July and August, and be ready to implement the tool by October. Much data on human trafficking is flawed and nationwide, child welfare agencies are still learning to identify and serve this population. S.B. 305, DCS' yearly legislative effort, would change the existing CHINS categories to add one for children who are victims of human trafficking.

Lutherwood Impact, Youth Opportunity Center, and Redwoods were mentioned as residential facilities who currently have programs for victims of human trafficking. DCS has developed service standards for providers serving victims of human trafficking. When

asked about ideal treatment options for these children, Heather Kestian referenced a “continuum of needs” approach used in Florida and as an example, noted that victims of human trafficking in Florida are given a bed at a foster home at which they are the only foster child for as long as that child is in the system. This gives the child a safe, permanent place to come back to, even if they run away. Kestian also recommended keeping the same provider for therapy.

Kestian noted that the victims seem to be divided into three levels: the first is younger and tends to present more as a victim, the second is older and slants more criminogenic, and the third is intermediate in age and varies as to whether or not they see themselves as a victim. Potential resource people for dealing with human trafficking were mentioned, including Kestian herself, Yvonne Moore, and Abigail Kuzma at the Attorney General’s Office.

8. Legal Orphans Project. Angela Reid-Brown, Magistrate Heather Mollo, and Matthew Hagenbush each reported on their examination of similar projects in other states, including New Jersey, Texas, and Georgia. A list of questions for judicial officers drafted by Angela and Matthew was circulated to the committee for their review and comment prior to the next meeting. Kimberly Howe-Ferguson compiled questionnaires from several youth, and reported the biggest takeaway being that youth wish to appear at their court hearings and understand what is being discussed and done at those hearings. Magistrate Mollo also distributed and reviewed a list of court practices suggested by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges for legal orphans.

Future meeting dates

- May 6, 2016
- July 1, 2016
- September 2, 2016
- November 4, 2016